Speech from the Throne 2008
Delivered at the Opening of
the First Session of the Forty-Sixth
General Assembly of the
Province of Newfoundland and Labrador
on Monday, March 10, 2008
by His Honour
The Honourable John C. Crosbie,PC, OC, ONL, QC
Lieutenant Governor of Newfoundland and Labrador

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## Heartfelt Gratitude top

**Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly:** Researchers in genetics at Memorial University recently made an exciting discovery that offers hope to countless people, both here and around the world, who are at risk of sudden, catastrophic heart failure at a very young age from a condition known as ARVC[1]. ARVC is especially prevalent in Newfoundland and Labrador families, but, until now, there has been no way to tell if a person has the faulty gene putting him or her at risk. Many families have been living under a dark cloud of fear, wondering if they or their children would be next. Fifty per cent of men with the gene die before age 40, while 80 per cent die before age 50; and women and younger people are also at great risk of sudden death. An interdisciplinary research team in cardiac genetics from Memorial, led by Drs. Terry-Lynn Young, molecular geneticist; Patrick Parfrey, clinical epidemiologist; and Sean Connors, cardiologist; has identified the genetic cause of the disease. Others on the research team at Memorial who have joined us today include Nancy Merner, Kathy Hodgkinson, Annika Haywood, Vanessa French, Barry Gallagher and Lynn Morris-Larkin.[2] These researchers, working with more than a dozen families in this province, recently located the single gene mutation responsible for this condition, enabling individuals to be tested to determine whether they are at risk. Those who are not at risk can for the first time rest easy while those with the gene can be implanted with defibrillators that can save their lives. Newfoundland and Labrador expresses its profound gratitude to this team for their groundbreaking research and to all the families whose participation in this study will help to save countless lives. You embody the tenacity, intelligence and fighting spirit of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

## Proud, Strong and Determined top

**Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly:** On the 9th of October 2007, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador were given the opportunity to make a choice. Our people were asked if they want Newfoundland and Labrador to be the master of its own house and control its own destiny within the federation of Canada. Our people were asked if they want to maintain the principle My Government adopted in 2003 of no more giveaways. Our people were asked if they want Newfoundland and Labrador to stay the course to self-reliance. On the 9th of October, the people of our province, in overwhelming numbers, re-elected My Government with a powerful **mandate** to build upon the initiatives of the past four years with pride, strength and determination to achieve at long last the promise of a self-reliant Newfoundland and Labrador. This was a resounding vote of confidence in the work of My Government and the leadership of My First Minister. Under his direction, My Government is beginning a new term full of new opportunities and new objectives. My Government has made a range of commitments that are compelling and comprehensive in scope and, over the course of the term ahead, My Government will deliver for the people.

The overarching goal of the term ahead is to move Newfoundland and Labrador boldly forward to **self-reliance**. In resource sectors such as oil and gas, electricity, mining, agrifoods and the fisheries, in growth sectors such as tourism and culture, in leading-edge sectors such as ocean technology and engineering, and in many other sectors of our economy, the opportunities are phenomenal and unprecedented. It is no accident that Newfoundland and Labrador stands on the cusp of a vibrant new future. These opportunities are here because of My Government's planning, our people's cooperation and My First Minister's leadership throughout the past four years.

Already, Newfoundland and Labrador is turning the corner. The tide has dramatically turned for the better in terms of job opportunities that are arising for the people of this province, now and in the future. Labour market conditions have significantly improved, with unemployment in marked decline and employment at a record high. My Government will work to ensure Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are well-equipped to take advantage of the opportunities ahead and the benefits of a prosperous economy. To give Newfoundlanders and Labradorians a head start to prepare for the incredible career opportunities, My Government commissioned and proceeded to implement the Skills Task Force report and the White Paper on Public Post-secondary Education. The province's **College of the North Atlantic and Memorial University** are leading the charge in preparing our students for the careers that await. Memorial University has already commenced a search process for a new President who will bring a renewed vision and work collaboratively with the government to help Newfoundland and Labrador move toward self-reliance and prosperity. My Government looks forward to fulfilling our commitment to grant Grenfell College full university status with a separate executive, senate and budget, while maintaining a common Board of Regents to secure a strong partnership

between the Grenfell and St. John's campuses. With a solid education to ground them and leaders in a wide range of disciplines to guide them, our graduates will be ready to take the reins of new opportunities as they arise.

Thanks to the leadership of My First Minister and the approach of My Government, our province's influence is being felt and our voice is being heard all across the country and far beyond – everywhere, that is, except at the federal Cabinet table. In the federal forum that once mattered most, Newfoundland and Labrador is treated with little but contempt and condescension. Ours is not the only provincial government to be treated with disdain by the Harper Government, but no province has been treated more dishonourably. My Government has been deeply frustrated by the current Federal Government's refusal to honour – among other promises – their explicit written commitment to **remove nonrenewable resource revenues** from the calculation of equalization, a commitment worth an estimated $10 billion to Newfoundland and Labrador according to independent economists. Given the magnitude of this commitment, My Government cannot, in good conscience, either forget it or cease to remind others of this broken promise. A Prime Minister who makes such a promise saying "there is no greater fraud than a promise not kept" stands condemned by his own words for refusing to keep it. By keeping their word, the Harper Government would have advanced our efforts to address our excessive burden of debt and achieve parity in the federation. Their actions are not only disingenuous but also dishonest. They have proven they cannot be trusted; but their great betrayal will do nothing to prevent us from achieving our goals on our own steam. Despite their opinion that they will win a government without Newfoundland and Labrador, our province will achieve its full potential as a prosperous and self-reliant partner within the federation with or without this Federal Government. We just want the opportunity to utilize our natural resources to become self-sufficient. We will resist any attempt to prevent this from occurring.

Ours is not the province it was two decades ago. Indeed, it is not the province it was five years ago. Fiscally and economically, we stand in a far more commanding position today than at any time in the past twenty years. As a result of our collective efforts to wrestle down the deficit, to ratchet up growth and to reach an agreement that fulfilled the promise of the Atlantic Accord, we are – for the first time in our history – poised to come **off equalization** very soon. This is a stunning achievement that will reinforce the bold new attitude of self-confidence that has taken hold among Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

For fifty-nine years, Newfoundland and Labrador has contributed enormously to the success of Canada. We have contributed resources of immeasurable value and, of even greater significance, we have contributed countless people – talented, tough and tenacious – whose energy and ingenuity have been powerfully instrumental in building the economies of our sister provinces and territories across Canada. As we move off equalization, it is **time for us to benefit** in a different way. The time has come for Newfoundland and Labrador to become a net importer of people. The time has come to reverse the trend of natural resource giveaways. The time has come for Newfoundland and Labrador to become a major centre of economic activity driving not only the Atlantic region but also the economy of Canada. It is time for people to take notice, because Newfoundland and Labrador is ready to lead the country.

Success in the twenty-first century is not merely about racking up high economic growth statistics. **Success is about people**. Success is about ensuring Newfoundland and Labrador communities remain places where people can put down roots and raise their families in an environment of social and economic security. This is self-reliance at its most fundamental.

Under the leadership of My First Minister beginning in 2003, My Government and the people of our province joined forces in a concentrated effort to enable all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to share in the bright future they desire and deserve. My Government invested in **socially progressive initiatives**, including the largest personal income tax cuts in our province's history, a poverty reduction strategy that national anti-poverty leaders herald as a model for the country, increased funding for new diagnostic and other medical equipment, insulin pumps for our children, new prescription drugs for those who need them, new long-term care homes, record spending on education, free textbooks for our students and the best post-secondary student aid package in the country. My Government also bolstered our communities by investing in a multi-billion-dollar strategy to improve infrastructure throughout the province, and by developing our province's first Northern Strategic Plan for Labrador. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are better positioned now than ever before to take full advantage of the fantastic opportunities at our doorstep.

With renewed pride, hope and self-assurance, we are ready to continue the journey we have started together. Strong within ourselves and strong within our country, we are standing tall and striving boldly to bring Newfoundland and Labrador into its own. As **masters of our own destiny**, with our eyes focused clearly on the opportunities ahead, we will become stronger and more secure than we have ever been before.

## Strong Economy with Strong Communities top

**Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly:** Among Newfoundland and Labrador's most promising sectors is the energy sector. My Government in September released Newfoundland and Labrador's first comprehensive, long-term **Energy Plan**: a strategy extending out to 2041 to prepare us for the expiration of the Upper Churchill agreements; a strategy to position us as an energy warehouse in eastern North America; a strategy to benefit Newfoundlanders and Labradorians first, while at the same time providing the right climate to promote development. The release of the Energy Plan marked a new era of self-confidence and promise for energy resource development in Newfoundland and Labrador. Our vast energy resources – including oil, gas, hydro, wind and others – will be developed in ways that bring sustainable economic development opportunities to both Labrador and the island, while returning valuable royalties, dividends and other revenues to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

My Government is especially excited about successfully negotiating **equity stakes** in the offshore development projects Hebron and White Rose satellites, in addition to a "super" royalty and industrial benefits. Those who said it could not be done have been proven wrong. My Government rejected old, outdated ways of thinking in favour of a bold, progressive, new approach. Securing equity means having greater leverage to control our own destiny. We welcome our new partners and look forward to many years of mutual success.

My Government will build on the other outstanding successes of 2007 in the coming year by advancing a broad array of **energy initiatives** that will include:

- finalizing framework agreements with the Hebron project partners;
- participating in the development of the White Rose satellites under our new agreement;
- advancing the Hibernia South project based upon successful reapplication;
- progressing the Lower Churchill project development plan toward project sanction and first power;
- advancing wind power development;
- completing an offshore Natural Gas Royalty Regime that will provide a fair return to industry and the people of this province;
- working with the proponents to advance the proposed new refinery near Come By Chance and the liquefied natural gas transshipment facility; and
- promoting increased offshore and onshore exploration and development on the west, south and east coasts and off the coast of Labrador.

Energy is not the only sector offering great promise. The province's **mining sector** achieved a record level of exploration expenditure of $138 million in 2007. The industry will continue to strengthen in 2008 with exploration, expansion at the Iron Ore Company of Canada operation in Labrador West, preparation for the construction of a nickel processing operation in 2009, and the opening of new mines at Beaver Brook and Pine Cove, all of which will create hundreds of high-paying jobs in rural communities. As production at Voisey's Bay continues, we look forward to future development of the

underground mineral reserves.

We also have great expectations for our **fisheries** – the backbone of many rural communities – which will benefit from the province's initiatives under the Fishing Industry Renewal Strategy. These include processing policy renewal, increased R&D, improved occupational health and safety, an enhanced harvesting sector loan guarantee program and strengthened workforce adjustment measures. We are also working with industry on innovative programs such as implementation of fish auctions and an enhanced seafood marketing structure.

My Government is disappointed that the current Federal Government has not yet acted on its promise to impose **custodial management** on the Nose and Tail of the Grand Banks and the Flemish Cap, and will continue to press the Federal Government to honour their promise. Reform of the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) is no substitute for custodial management, in terms of either timing or efficacy.

My Government is reaffirming its commitment that the province would participate in a cost-shared, federal-provincial **early retirement / licence buyback** program.

The fishing industry last year achieved a production value exceeding one billion dollars. My Government affirms that the fishing industry, which anchored our proud past, will always be **vitally important** to rural Newfoundland and Labrador as we work to build a strong, sustainable future. Both in the near term and for generations to come, the fisheries will continue to be a major employer, a major economic generator and a major source of pride throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

The **aquaculture industry** has benefited since 2005 from a progressive suite of initiatives – including working capital investments in 2005, a capital equity program in 2006, and an aquaculture health facility and wastewater treatment program in 2007 – that have broken through the barriers that had precluded the commercial development of aquaculture for many years. Production of salmonids, which was less than 5,000 tonnes worth about $15 million in 2007, is projected to reach 15,000 tonnes worth some $80 million in 2009. Success in aquaculture has brought an exciting new sense of optimism and a brighter outlook to our south and northeast coasts.

Our **forestry sector**, which has weathered particularly tough challenges, will benefit from the implementation of the provincially-funded and independently-produced forest sector strategy report. Initiatives advanced under this strategy will reflect My Government's appreciation of the immense value of our forest industry and a strong conviction that this industry does indeed have a sustainable future in Newfoundland and Labrador over the long term.

Newfoundland and Labrador's economy will also benefit from My Government's steadfast commitment to continue investing in the kinds of **infrastructure and services** that embolden investors and stimulate growth. My Government has already announced an investment this year of $182 million in road improvements, the largest such funding in the province's history. This will include a record $73 million for the Provincial Roads Improvement Program, an amount 10 per cent higher than last year's figure, which set a record of its own. Funding this year will also significantly improve the national highway system in Newfoundland and Labrador. My Government will work with Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador to review fiscal policies, to develop an infrastructure investment strategy that targets resources in line with the needs and capabilities of our municipalities, and to develop regional approaches to service delivery that will lead to stronger communities with stronger economies.

## Strong Labrador top

**Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly**: With the release of the **Northern Strategic Plan** for Labrador, My Government demonstrated an unfailing commitment to Labradorians and an unwavering determination to ensure the Big Land enjoys opportunities that are unprecedented in its long, proud history. My Government's commitment to Labradorians will not fail, nor will its determination to advance the well-being of Labradorians waver throughout the implementation of the Energy Plan or any other venture. The Northern Strategic Plan is a living document with clear goals and focused priorities for Labrador. My Government recognizes that Labrador will play a significant role in the overall future of the province and looks forward to working with Labradorians to implement the Northern Strategic Plan. Investments in Labrador under the plan include completion of the Trans-

Labrador Highway and other infrastructure improvements along with important advances in health care, education, natural resource management, tourism, culture and social services.

There are now two Ministers representing Labrador in the provincial Cabinet, including – for the first time in our province's history – an Aboriginal woman who is serving as the **Minister of Aboriginal Affairs**. This Minister, who formerly served as a member of the Nunatsiavut transitional government, will be instrumental in working with Aboriginal leaders and communities in advancing the status of Aboriginal people and Aboriginal women's issues in Newfoundland and Labrador. Having welcomed the inauguration of the Nunatsiavut Government, My Government will continue to implement the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement, particularly the provisions respecting devolution of programs and services and self-government. My Government will also work constructively with the Innu Nation toward the achievement of a Comprehensive Land Claims Agreement, and will also work cooperatively to advance the well-being of the Metis people of Labrador and the Mi'kmaq people of the island.

## Strong Governance top

**Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly**: My Government moved early and effectively to shine the spotlight of accountability on the operations of the Government and of the House of Assembly. My Government commissioned Chief Justice Derek Green to recommend an overhaul of management procedures at the House of Assembly and subsequently enacted legislation reflecting his recommendations. Among his recommendations was a call for **'whistleblower' legislation** establishing procedures for the disclosure of wrongdoings and for protecting public servants who disclose wrongdoings.

My Government will introduce whistleblower legislation this year after appropriate consultation has taken place.

## Strong People

**Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly**: My Government will build on important initiatives set in motion during the first term, including the Poverty Reduction Strategy, the Provincial Healthy Aging Policy Framework, the Immigration Strategy, the Violence Prevention Initiative and initiatives to advance the status of women; and will also take new initiatives to advance the well-being of our people. With a new Minister Responsible for the **Volunteer and Non-profit Sector**, My Government will draw on the talents, energy and compassion of thousands of volunteers and hundreds of community-based organizations across our province who are working to make Newfoundland and Labrador a better place to live.

With a new Minister Responsible for Persons with Disabilities and a new **Division of Disabilities**, My Government will make great strides in enhancing the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all aspects of our society. In consultation with persons with disabilities, My Government will commission a study of the barriers they encounter – including barriers to public services, education and employment – and develop recommendations and strategies to address them effectively so persons with disabilities can take full advantage of the opportunities that lie ahead in this province.

My Government's groundbreaking **Poverty Reduction Strategy** has been praised by advocates across Canada as the model others should adopt, but our work has only just begun. My Government is committed to maintaining an open dialogue with families and community partners to ensure we are making the right investments and making a real difference. My Government remains committed to helping people make the transition from income support to the work force.

Promoting growth means implementing policies that are friendly to families. The family is the foundation of our communities and our province. We must continue to build our reputation as a place where people can raise their families in a positive, nurturing environment. My Government will proceed this year with initiatives to provide support for **growing families** to make it a little easier for them to make ends meet as they put down roots in our communities.

My Government is particularly determined to advance the **status of women** in our province and will do so by promoting apprenticeship and employment opportunities for women in nontraditional

sectors, by encouraging their participation in influential roles in the community, and by addressing the special challenges that so many women face, which sadly in too many instances include violence and poverty.

## Strong on Crime top

**Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly**: To ensure the security of our people, My Government will build on the strong investments of the past four years in **crime-fighting and violence prevention**. No one should live in fear – not a child, not a senior, not a woman, not a victim of crime and not a community. My Government will introduce further steps to prevent criminals from benefiting from their crimes by seizing the proceeds of crime and directing the value of these seizures directly back into provincial law enforcement and crime prevention. My Government will also modernize the province's Human Rights Code, which has not had a major revision for two decades. Specific initiatives to battle crime and protect people will be announced in the forthcoming Budget.

## Strong Culture top

**Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly**: Our province's unique culture has been shaped by our economy, our environment and people of many ancestries. My Government this year will build on the work of the **Strategic Cultural Plan** and proceed with a new Intangible Cultural Heritage Strategy to help preserve, strengthen and celebrate our distinctive and intangible cultural heritage, including languages, traditional knowledge and skills, customs, and music. We will be welcoming others to share our culture here at home as we prepare to host the North Atlantic Fiddle Convention and, in Corner Brook a year from now, the East Coast Music Awards. We will also be preparing to welcome visitors here for events of international significance in the next two years: in 2009, the 100th anniversary of the historic voyage to the North Pole of Captain Bob Bartlett of Brigus, and in 2010, the 400th anniversary of the founding of Cupids.

My Government's unprecedented investments in **tourism** marketing are paying off. In November 2007, Newfoundland and Labrador's tourism marketing campaign won the Tourism Industry Association of Canada's Marketing Campaign of the Year Award. In December, Newfoundland and Labrador was named a top 30 travel destination for 2008 by Lonely Planet Publications, one of the world's most respected travel guidebook publishers. In February, the highly-respected Fodor's travel institution highlighted Newfoundland and Labrador in a guide entitled "Where We're Going in 2008: Seven Places Americans Have Yet to Discover". This national and international recognition is a clear indication that Newfoundland and Labrador is no longer the world's best-kept secret. My Government is working with the tourism industry in the development of a new tourism vision and plan to ensure we continue to develop our tourism products and experiences. We will continue to creatively market the province and build on our successes in ways that will attract more and more visitors and the opportunities they bring to our communities.

## Strong on the Environment top

**Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly**: Public concerns about climate change, both globally and locally, have fostered a groundswell of interest in finding better ways to live more sustainably. My Government in 2005 developed a **Climate Change Action Plan** which, together with the Energy Plan, plotted a path forward to energy efficiency, waste reduction and sustainable living. This year, My Government will further update the action plan and include new initiatives to prepare the province for the impacts of climate change. Specific initiatives will be laid out in this year's Budget and in the months that follow.

The native woodland **caribou** on the island is an important historical and cultural symbol for this province, and an important resource for resident hunters and the outfitting industry. It is the only woodland caribou population in North America that is not listed as threatened or endangered. Still, caribou populations on the island have been in decline since they peaked in the mid to late nineties. My Government will strengthen its caribou strategy this year with an intensive five-year research and action program to better understand caribou population needs and threats, and will identify, test, and implement wildlife management practices that can help ensure the long-term integrity of the herds.

## Strong Health Care top

**Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly**: Among the most important **priorities in health care delivery** are facilities, equipment and – most importantly – health care professionals. My Government remains strongly committed to recruiting and retaining doctors, nurses and other professionals who deliver the vital health care services our people need. My Government will announce initiatives respecting all of these key priorities in conjunction with this year's Budget. Among these initiatives will be an increase in funding to address the most critical maintenance and repair issues at health care facilities.

My Government has made significant investments in new health **infrastructure** and capital repairs and maintenance in health facilities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador over the last four years, totaling $128 million. Our health care system has been strengthened with the completion of satellite renal dialysis sites in Burin, St. Anthony and Happy Valley-Goose Bay and the opening of two new cancer clinics in Central Newfoundland. In the months ahead, we will continue to see the results of this investment, including the openings of the new long-term care home in Clarenville and the new Humberwood Addictions Treatment Centre in Corner Brook. This year will also see the new primary health clinic and re-development of the Blue Crest Inter Faith Nursing Home in Grand Bank completed. As well, we are committed to making further investments in health infrastructure such as the new health centre for Labrador West and the completion of the long-term care home in Corner Brook. Our health care system has been further strengthened by an injection of $76 million over the last four years in capital equipment, which included such major investments as the addition of five new CT scanners throughout the province, an MRI machine in Corner Brook, a third MRI for the Janeway Children's Hospital, and funding for two new radiation bunkers and radiation treatment machines for the Dr. H. Bliss Murphy Cancer Centre. My Government is building on a record of unprecedented health care investments that are working to enhance the health and well-being of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

My Government this year will implement Phase II of the **Provincial Wellness Plan**, focusing particularly on the promotion of mental health, child and youth development, environmental health and health protection. These objectives will complement the Phase I initiatives that focused on healthy eating, physical activity, tobacco control and injury prevention.

My Government broke new ground last year in releasing and commencing to implement the province's **Healthy Aging Plan**, and will proceed this year to implement year two of the plan with further initiatives to promote the well-being of seniors.

Consistent with the Healthy Aging Policy Framework, My Government will advance a **Long-Term Care and Community Supports Strategy**, building on a range of initiatives already underway. In particular, My Government will advance plans to redevelop and modernize the province's long-term care homes, to improve home care services, to implement equitable financial assessment processes and to redevelop standards for long-term care homes, personal care homes and home support services.

## Strong Minds top

**Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly**: Nothing gives us more optimism for a bright future than the confidence, hope and pride we see in the faces of our **students**. Some are children whose paths we determine. Others are older students who are charting their own course to a successful career. In all cases, we must be supportive, innovative and always striving for excellence.

At the **K-12 level**, My Government will build on initiatives of the past four years to advance the quality of education our students receive and respond to needs that will make the system better able to position these students to seize the opportunities before them, right here at home in Newfoundland and Labrador. Strengthening our education system means investing strategically in programs and in education professionals. My Government has received and evaluated the recommendations of the Teacher Allocation Commission and will announce its plans in the days ahead.

Since 2004, My Government has allocated $111 million for new school **construction, maintenance and repair** projects. Funding has been allocated for the construction of 11 new schools as well as renovations and extensions to many existing buildings. There were 200 roofing, siding, window and exterior maintenance projects completed or underway at a cost of approximately $25 million. In

addition, over $2.4 million has been approved for 25 fire and life safety projects, such as fire protection systems, fire rated corridors and electrical upgrades. Approximately $2.6 million has been approved for 87 air quality projects such as air quality and hazardous material testing, remediation, carpet removal and ventilation. More than $24 million has been invested in projects involving the repair or replacement of roofing, siding, windows and brickwork since 2004 and other miscellaneous projects. Between 2005-06 and 2007-08, the budget for school construction almost doubled from approximately $25 million to approximately $49 million. Additional work will be announced in conjunction with this year's Budget.

At the post-secondary level, My Government in Budget 2007 announced significant enhancements to the **student aid** program. Newfoundland and Labrador led the country in reducing provincial student loan interest rates to prime, a 2.5 per cent reduction, and now provides up to 50 per cent of provincial student assistance as an up-front grant. Both of these advances reflect the priorities My Government heard from our post-secondary students themselves.

My Government will continue to support the efforts of the province's post-secondary students and its institutions through the implementation of its White Paper on Public Post-secondary Education. The **tuition freeze** at Memorial University and College of the North Atlantic will continue for a further four years. Making post-secondary education affordable and accessible, and ensuring research and development are supported within these institutions, continue to be key priorities of My Government.

Initiatives to address financial accessibility and student debt not only help the students themselves. They also help our province to educate and retain the skilled professionals we will need as new economic development projects commence and opportunities expand. My Government established a **Skills Task Force** during its first term and commenced an action plan to deliver on the recommendations. My Government will continue to take measures to ensure that our people are well prepared to take advantage of the many opportunities that lie ahead.

My Government is determined to position Newfoundland and Labrador as a leader in innovation and will establish this year, as a new Crown entity, the **Newfoundland and Labrador Research and Development Council**, a groundbreaking initiative to develop and lead a provincial R&D strategy to build a stronger knowledge-based economy and plot a course toward sustained prosperity. My Government will also implement year three of its Innovation Strategy and launch the Ocean Technology Strategy which, together with the Polaris program and the Northwest Atlantic Ocean Observing System initiative, will position Newfoundland and Labrador as an international leader in ocean technology development.

## The Future is Ours top

**Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly**: We are today at a critical point in our history as we prepare to make the long-anticipated transition from a 'have-not' jurisdiction to a 'have' province. Our day is now beginning to dawn. And with this dawning comes the confirmation that the course My Government chose four years ago is the right one. The principle of no more giveaways is the right one. The principle of making our own way and taking control of our resources is the right one. The principle of demanding accountability for federal commitments is the right one. We are ready to be fiscally self-sufficient, to be economically sustainable, to be socially secure and to be counted in Canada as strong contributors to the federation.

The bright new realities awaiting Newfoundland and Labrador demand the new way of thinking that My Government has boldly embraced. No longer can we afford to listen to those who try to impose on us their own outdated way of thinking. The time has come for us to chart our own course, to determine our own destiny, to think outside the box that others have tried to confine us within. New realities require new approaches. As the world continues to change, we must continue to adjust our game plan to ensure the approach we take is working. When there are successes, we must learn from them. When there are setbacks, we must learn from them as well. We must be prepared to try innovative approaches to ensure we remain relevant, on the leading edge of change, riding the global wave that will carry us forward from the subservience we have suffered for too long to the brand new future of self-reliance and sustainability that is beginning to dawn.

The support and confidence of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that has sustained My Government these past four years is the foundation for the successes we will achieve in the years to

come. The work that remains to be done will be achieved with the continuing confidence and cooperation of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. It is only by continuing to work together that we will remain masters of the destiny we share.

Together, we will ensure our future is stronger than our past. Together, we will show the world we are a powerhouse of opportunities with the courage, competence, commitment and conviction to convert those opportunities into sustainability prosperity for the benefit of all. The promise is within reach. The future is ours. Proud, strong and determined, we will achieve our great promise by standing tall together, united as one, Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly: Estimates of expenditure will be laid before you in due course and you will be asked to grant supply to Her Majesty.

I invoke God's blessing upon you as you commence this new Session.

May Divine Providence guide you in your deliberation.

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[1] Arrhythmogenic right ventricular cardiomyopathy

[2] The research team also included Jörg-Detlef Drenckhahn, Christine Kupprion, Kalina Ramadanova, Ludwig Thierfelder, William McKenna and Anne Bassett.

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